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December 11, 2008

Arizona Commission on the Arts
Attn: Governor's Arts Awards
417 West Roosevelt Street
Phoenix, AZ 85003-1326

Dear Commissioner's Panel;

I have been asked to write a letter for Mr. James Muir in reference to his consideration for the Governors Arts Award. I find this request of me to be a bit unusual, specifically for the reason that I am not in the Arts world, I am not a collector, nor do I have basis of academic knowledge in the Arts; I am a police officer. I deal with the inhumanity that man extracts upon his fellow man. So why me?

I met James Muir some ten years ago as I was searching for a sculptor to guide me in creating a memorial for our deputies in the Sheriff's Office that had been killed in the line of duty. James happened to run into Sheriff Arpaio at one of his book signings, and the Sheriff passed the contact information on to me. After initial conversations, James Muir started what turned out to be tutelage for me, a journey of education, realization, and appreciation for not only his work, but also the work of countless other gifted artists that have dramatically impacted my world.

The art of James Muir is a direct reflection of a calling, a gift that has been give to him to capture significant and wondrous seconds in time or symbolic representations of deep seeded beliefs that speak to the inner person and souls of the people that view his work. James was specifically chosen to be the inspiration for the Sheriff's Office Memorial for these reasons; a review of his works, conversations with him regarding his beliefs, and the realization that the passion that burned inside of him was to create a piece that would honor those deputy sheriff's that have made the ultimate sacrifice. It was not by mistake that James Muir created a one of a kind Sheriff's Office memorial of a riderless horse standing on the book of justice, aptly named "*They Served Well.*" It was a meeting of worlds that resulted in a unique, symbolic representation that honors those that have been killed in the line of duty. His work captured not only the heartbreaking loss of a loved one in service to his or her community, but it also kindled the fire of hope; that another was willing to pin on the badge, strap on the gun, and regain the mount in protection of society using the book of justice as the foundation for his or her acts.

It is not singularly about the piece of art, nor is it about the artist; it is about the combination of the two and how that symbiotic relationship expresses itself to those that view the completed work. It is the totality of James' labor representing seconds in time, symbolic beliefs, or paying tribute to past greatness that delivers a singular and distinct message to each of us. The creations of James Muir absolutely reflect the level of honor, passion, and dignity of the prestigious Governors Art Award.

Sincerely,

John A. Kleinheinz